

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, WB, GW

SUBJECT: CDU VICTORY AND SUBSTANTIAL COALITION LOSSES IN
IN ZEHLENDORF REPEAT ELECTION

1. AS LARGELY ANTICIPATED, CDU EMERGED AS VISTOR IN
JANUARY 25 REPEAT ELECTION IN TWO ZEHLENDORF CONSTITU-
ENCIES, ESSENTIALLY DUPLICATING ITS PERFORMANCE OF LAST
MARCH 2. (AS ADDRESSEES WILL RECALL, BERLIN ELECTORAL
COURT INVALIDATED ON NOVEMBER 12 RESULTS OF MARCH
1975 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTIONS IN THESE TWO
CONSTITUENCIES ON GROUNDS THAT BARRING OF NON-PARTY
CANDIDATES IN ACCORDANCE WITH BERLIN CONSTITUTION HAD
BEEN CONTRARY TO FRG BASIC LAW.) MAJOR LOSSES,
ON OTHER HAND, WERE SUFFERED BY BOTH SPD AND FDP:
FORMER SAW SHARE OF VOTE DWINDLE IN ONE CONSTITUENCY
FROM 28.2 PERCENT TO 21.2 PERCENT AND IN OTHER FROM
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33.8 PERCENT TO 26.4 PERCENT, WHILE LATTER EXPERIENCED

IN BOTH CASES DECLINE OF 3.3 PERCENT. BENEFICIARY OF THESE COALITION LOSSES WAS ELECTORAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CITIZENS (WUB), ON WHOSE BEHALF SPECIAL ELECTION HAD BEEN CALLED AND WHICH OBTAINED 13.8 PERCENT OF VOTE IN ONE CONSTITUENCY AND 14.4 PERCENT IN OTHER (INSUFFICIENT, HOWEVER, FOR ANY SEATS IN HOUSE). SPLINTER PARTIES (SEW, BFD, KPD) ALL FARED CONSIDERABLY WORSE THAN IN MARCH.

2. BOTH CDU CANDIDATES FOR DIRECT ELECTION--HEINRICH LUMMER AND HENNING LEMMER--WERE OF COURSE RETURNED TO THEIR SEATS. WHEN ADDED TO MARCH 2 RESULTS FOR REMAINDER OF CITY, SPECIAL ELECTION OUTCOME ALTERED OVERALL ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF MAJOR PARTIES SLIGHTLY, AND AS CONSEQUENCE CDU PICKED UP ONE ADDITIONAL SEAT ON CITY-WIDE BASIS. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WILL THEREFORE CONSIST OF 147 RATHER THAN 146 DEPUTIES, AND CDU CAUCUS WILL BE 69 RATHER THAN 68 STRONG. COALITION MAJORITY WILL THEREFORE BE REDUCED TO NINE SEATS. IN ADDITION, DUE TO FURTHER VAGARIES OF PROPORTIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM, ONE SEAT OF EACH OF THREE MAJOR PARTIES WILL BE TRANSFERRED FROM ZEHLENDORF TO OTHER BERLIN DISTRICTS (WITHOUT AFFECTING, HOWEVER, OVERALL RELATIVE STRENGTHS).

3. BERLIN CDU LEADERSHIP IS JUSTIFIABLY HIGHLY PLEASED WITH ZEHLENDORF RESULTS. PARTY CHAIRMAN LORENZ CHARACTERIZED THESE AS "EXCELLENT PRELUDE" TO FEDERAL ELECTIONS NEXT OCTOBER, AND RE-ELECTED CAUCUS CHAIRMAN LUMMER SPOKE OF REJECTION BY VOTERS OF SPD-FDP COALITION THAT CAME TO POWER IN BERLIN TEN MONTHS AGO. SPD AND FDP LEADERS ARE PLAINLY SHOCKED BY EXTENT OF THEIR LOSSES, WHICH CAN HARDLY BE ATTRIBUTED SOLELY TO RELATIVELY LOW VOTER TURNOUT AND WHICH COULD WELL HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR LARGER FRG POLITICAL SCENE. AND IMPRESSIVE SHOWING OF WUB HAS PROMPTED SPOKESMEN FOR ALL THREE PARTIES REPRESENTED IN HOUSE TO URGE CLOSER ATTENTION IN FUTURE TO EXPRESSED NEEDS AND DESIRES OF CITIZENRY.

4. COMMENT: BROADER IMPLICATIONS AS TO VOTER BEHAVIOR
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CAN HARDLY BE DRAWN WITH ANY DEGREE OF CERTAINTY FROM SO LOCALIZED AND ATYPICAL AN ELECTORAL CONTEST. THAT THE CDU TREND CONTINUES STRONG IS EVIDENT; YET COALITION LOSSES AND SUCCESS OF WUB DO NOT LEND SELVES TO EASY GENERALIZATION. WUB IS MAVERICK ORGANIZATION THAT EXISTS ONLY IN ZEHLENDORF, ITS ORIGIN BEING AS PRESSURE GROUP DEDICATED TO DEFEATING SENAT PROJECT FOR CONSTRUCTION OR ROAD UNDERPASS IN THAT DISTRICT. (WUB GIVEN BOOST

WEEK BEFORE ELECTION WHEN SPD SENATOR FOR BUILDING AND HOUSING, TOLD MEETING OF ZEHLENDORF VOTERS THAT PROJECT STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY SENAT.)
EXTEND OF LOCAL RESENTMENT AGAINST THIS PROJECT AS REFLECTED IN JANUARY 25 VOTE HAS LITTLE DIRECT CORRELATION ELSEWHERE IN CITY OR ON BROADER POLITICAL SCENE.
NEVERTHELESS, WITHOUT IMPLYING THAT SAME DEGREE OF DISSATISFACTION EXISTS IN WEST BERLIN AS WHOLE, WE READ WUB SUCCESS AS PERHAPS GENERALLY INDICATIVE OF A READINESS ON PART OF NORMALLY SPD OR FDP VOTER IN BERLIN TO CAST PROTEST BALLOT WHEN SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATE (NON-CDU) IS AVAILABLE. IN OTHER WORDS, VOTER INDEPENDENCE IS GROWING AND TRADITIONAL PARTY LOYALTIES ARE WAVERING IF NOT BREAKING DOWN IN FACE OF WHAT IS SEEN BY MANY AS INEPT AND UNRESPONSIVE PERFORMANCE ON PART OF GOVERNING COALITION. THIS IS SYMPTOMATIC OF LARGER PROBLEM AT LEAST OF BERLIN SPD, WHICH HAS ACQUIRED REPUTATION--MANY WOULD SAY DESERVEDLY--AS PARTY OF MIDDLE-GRADE CAREERISTS WHO HAVE SCANT CONCERN FOR POPULAR MOOD OR DESIRES.
ELECTION, IN EFFECT, AMOUNT TO WARNING TO BERLIN GOVERNING COALITION AND TO SPD IN PARTICULAR THAT CONTINUATION OF PRESENT COURSE COULD HAVE SERIOUS ELECTORAL CONSEQUENCES IN FUTURE. GEORGE

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